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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [ETRD](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: MAJOR TURKISH TRUCKING COMPANY BOSS THREATENS TO
CLOSE HABUR GATE OVER SECURITY CONCERNS

REF: A. ANKARA 4340

[B](#). ANKARA 5997
[C](#). STATE 195610

(U) Sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: The head of a large Turkish trucking company, Emin Deger, warned emboffs Oct. 22 that U.S. and Turkish officials have been too slow to address the security concerns of Turkish truckers in Iraq, threatening that he could close the Habur Gate if he wished. Deger said that many of those attacking truckers were not ideologically-motivated insurgents, but criminal gangs after money. Deger accused the U.S. of being both insensitive and ineffective in dealing with the problem. He proposed creating an Iraqi unit of mixed ethnicity to provide convoy security. Deger is well-connected politically. We do not believe he really plans to try to close down the Habur Gate and the northern Ground Line of Communication (GLOC), but he reflects well Turkish frustration over continuing security problems for Turkish drivers and contractors in Iraq. End summary.

[2](#). (SBU) At his request, Emboffs called on Emin Deger, Head of Deger International Transport and Trading Company and the Turkish-Iraqi Friendship Association, in his Ankara office on Oct. 22. Deger, a Turkish Kurd of Iraqi background, told us that until three months ago, his company had been a KBR subcontractor carrying 3000 tons/day of humanitarian fuel shipments into Iraq as far as Baghdad. Now that the Iraqi State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) has taken over humanitarian fuel shipments, his company now carries less than a quarter of that amount into Iraq daily.

[3](#). (SBU) Deger complained that despite somewhat beefed-up coalition protection for truck convoys in recent weeks, security for Turkish truck drivers remains inadequate. He says that so far his company has had one trucker killed and two kidnapped in Iraq; one of the kidnap victims is his relative. He also claims to have lost a number of trucks and their cargo. Deger claimed bandits attack trucks both in and out of convoy in Iraq going both directions. He characterized those attacking trucks and truckers as bandits, not insurgents. He believes that most of the attacks are conducted by a single group of about 90 persons (Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen) and that they are motivated by financial gain, not insurgents motivated by a political vision.

[4](#). (SBU) Deger claimed that he had information on individual leaders of these gangs, and that his employees in Iraq had attempted to pass this information on to the Iraqi police. However the police, according to Deger, informed his employees that while they may work as police by day, they work with the criminals/insurgents by night. He said that a Turkmen named "Mustafa" and a restaurant owner named "Farhan" in Mosul were the main ringleaders, along with a police officer named "Ibrahim," who was since killed (NFI). The dead police officer, Ibrahim, worked at the Jemal police station, 70 km south of Mosul on the road to Baji. His cousin (NFI) works at a restaurant 1.5 km south of this police station, and served as the connection between the police and the criminal gangs/insurgents. According to Deger, the major offload point north of Mosul, Filfil, is the main gathering point for both criminal gangs and insurgents. He said that it is well-known among the trucking companies that Filfil is the place to go to get information on missing trucks and their drivers.

[5](#). (SBU) Deger seemed well-informed on GOT efforts to work with the USG and the IIG on the trucker security problem, but he declared these efforts inadequate. He said he had strongly opposed the call in August by the International Transporters Union (UND in Turkish--see ref a) for a ban on trucking in support of the coalition, and that he continues to counsel truck companies and individual drivers on the importance of trade between Turkey and Iraq and of not giving into the terrorists and criminals. But, Deger continued, he believes the U.S. and Turkey have been much too slow to act and the situation has become worse. The U.S., he went on, has also been "insensitive" in dealing with him on this

issue. He claimed that through his contacts he could easily close down the Habur Gate, though he was not immediately inclined to do so.

16. (SBU) Emboffs assured Deger that both the GOT and the USG were quite concerned about trucker security, and that trilateral (USG, GOT, IIG) meetings were about to start as a further step in grappling with the problem. We noted that sustainment and humanitarian shipping, as well as regular commercial traffic, over the GLOC was significant and vital to Iraqi stability and future prosperity. Deger said he understood this, and emphasized his feeling of solidarity with the Iraqi people.

17. (SBU) We asked Deger what measures he thought would be effective, and he recommended a multi-ethnic (Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen) convoy protection team of 200-300 Iraqis who could be funded by the IIG, the USG, and/or the truckers themselves. The team would include mechanics and ambulances to handle stalled trucks and injured drivers and would be solely responsible for convoy security and have no other duties. When emboffs asked if 200-300 people would be enough, he said that more might be needed, but the smaller the better. "If you have a larger unit," Deger said, "you have a larger problem."

18. (SBU) Comment: Deger is well-connected politically (and is known in particular to be close to former President Demirel) and runs a larger trucking company here. It is not clear whether he has the influence to effectively close down the GLOC. His threat, we believe, reflects overall Turkish frustration with the continued attacks against and kidnappings of Turkish truckers. We understand many Turkish truck drivers are refusing to drive south of Mosul out of security concerns. While we cannot evaluate Deger's recommendation for improving security for the drivers, it is all the more important that trilateral trucker security talks (refs b and c) begin as soon as possible to demonstrate U.S. seriousness. End comment.

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN